

# News from Ed Markey

United States Congress

Massachusetts Seventh District

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## **MARKEY UNVEILS V-CHIP AND BLOCKS OUT DAYTIME SOAP OPERA IN FIRST-EVER DEMONSTRATION OF BLOCKING TECHNOLOGY PAIRED WITH TV RATINGS**

**June 18, 1998**

*The following is the statement delivered by U.S. Rep. Ed Markey at the first national demonstration of blocking television programming using ratings transmitted over-the-air to the V-Chip. The new system was demonstrated in dramatic fashion when a packed press conference viewed an older television equipped with a set-top box and a new television with a built-in V-Chip as programming switched from a local newscast to an afternoon soap opera which both V-Chips successfully blocked from viewers.*

### **Rep. Markey's remarks follow:**

"Good afternoon everyone, and thank you for coming.

We have with us today the entire House V-Chip legislative team -- Reps. Dan Burton, John Spratt, Jim Moran and I. The four of us made enactment of the V-chip law our highest priority at a time when it was opposed by a vast and imposing industry coalition. We are proud that we have come so far so fast, and I will be calling on each of my colleagues in a moment.

Today you are about to witness the dawning of a revolution. For the first time you will see the real-world operation of V-Chip blocking technology, a device intended for any parent who is sick over the amount of violent or sexually-explicit programming viewed by their children in the family living room. The average American child views 8000 televised murders and 100,000 televised acts of violence by the time he or she graduates from elementary school. From this day forward, any parent can say "Not in my house - not for my child."

All of us are mindful of the spate of shocking school shootings that have plagued our country over the last year. We are not here to claim that technology is going to solve this problem, nor is it likely to have any immediate impact. None of what we are about to demonstrate will have any impact at all if parents don't use it.

But this simple device is part of the answer for anyone seeking a way to restore some semblance of civil behavior in a society saturated with images that undermine that behavior.

Last week, pursuant to the V-Chip law that we proudly enacted in 1996, the first of our national TV networks began actually transmitting the electronic signals that give life to V-Chip blocking technology. CBS flipped the switch last week, ABC is almost finished its

testing and the other networks are close on their heels. So the lights have finally been turned "on," providing every family the opportunity to reduce drastically the amount violent or sexually-explicit TV programming viewed by their children."

"We will inaugurate the V-chip, with the help of two manufacturers of V-chip devices. Mr. Larry Lien, CEO of Parental Guide, and Jack Olivo are here to demonstrate their V-chip box - a retrofit device that can be attached to any existing TV. Mr. Peter Fannon, Director of Government & Public Affairs, and Paul Schomberg are here for Panasonic/Matsushita, and they will do the same with V-Chip technology built into a new TV set. In both cases, they will use a remote control to set the TV to block all shows rated "TV-PG" or higher, thus playing the role of a parent headed out to do some errands leaving the kids with a teenage sitter. The local news is on as the parent leaves, providing the weather and sports. Since the news is not rated, the V-Chip allows the programming to air.

But the programming changes dramatically at 12:30 when the afternoon soap operas begin. While many adults love soap operas, many adults with young children consider these shows inappropriate for children. At 12:30, CBS airs a soap opera, "The Young & the Restless", which CBS has given a rating of "TV-14-D". So what you can expect to see, momentarily, is the screen to go blank leaving only a few words indicating that the show has a rating that you, the viewer, have asked to be blocked

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